



## Education level and projected openings, 2019–29

Elka Torpey | October 2020

Perhaps you aspire to an associate's degree, or you're determined to get a doctorate. Or maybe you have no plans for formal education. Whatever your goal is, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has data by education level that show which occupations are expected to have the most openings over the coming decade.

BLS makes long-term employment projections for nearly 800 detailed occupations. Each occupation is assigned to the education level that's typically required for workers to enter. This article highlights 50 of the occupations that BLS projects to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029. These occupational openings are grouped by education level as follows:

- [No formal educational credential](#)
- [High school diploma or equivalent](#)
- [Associate's degree; postsecondary nondegree award; and some college, no degree](#)
- [Bachelor's degree](#)
- [Master's, doctoral, and professional degrees](#)

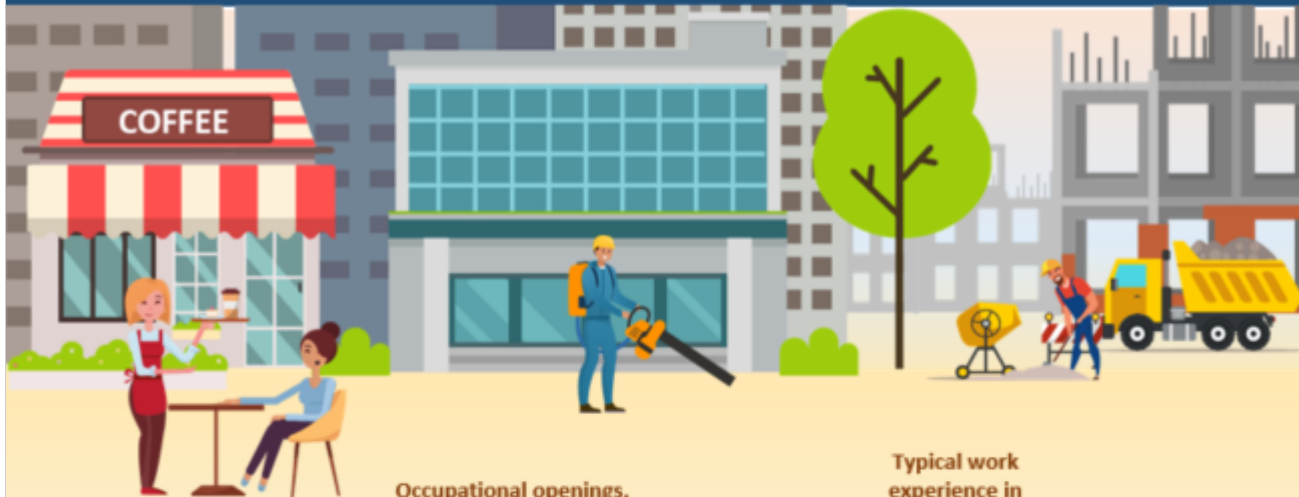
Across all occupations, BLS projects more than 17 million openings each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029. Openings arise from two sources: when new jobs are created from employment growth and when workers leave an occupation permanently, such as to transfer to another occupation or to retire.

Keep reading to see tables showing projected openings and median annual wages at each of the education levels. (A median wage is the point at which half of workers made more than the amount, and half made less. In 2019, the median annual wage for all workers was \$39,810.) The tables also indicate whether workers typically need experience in a related occupation for entry and whether on-the-job training to attain competency is typically required.

## No formal educational credential

BLS classifies 103 occupations as not typically needing any formal educational credential. Table 1 shows the 10 occupations in this group that are projected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029.

**Table 1. No formal educational credential to enter:**  
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2019–29



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2019–29 annual average	Median annual wage, 2019	Typical work experience in a related occupation	Typical on-the- job training
Fast food and counter workers	826,600	\$22,740	None	Short-term
Retail salespersons	568,100	25,250	None	Short-term
Cashiers	558,600	23,650	None	Short-term
Waiters and waitresses	475,700	22,890	None	Short-term
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	380,600	29,510	None	Short-term
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners	305,600	27,430	None	Short-term
Cooks, restaurant	237,200	27,790	Less than 5 years	Moderate-term
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	181,500	24,850	None	Short-term
Landscaping and groundskeeping workers	158,900	30,440	None	Short-term
Construction laborers	141,100	36,860	None	Short-term

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

The occupations in table 1 account for about 68 percent of all openings projected at this education level. [Fast food and counter workers](#) is projected to have more openings than any other occupation in the economy: more than

800,000 each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029. Although most of these openings are expected from the need to replace workers who leave this large occupation each year, BLS also projects many new jobs to be created.

Each of the occupations in table 1, like most at this education level, had wages below the median for all occupations. The occupations in the table may not require formal education, but they typically involve training on the job, often for 1 month or less.

## High school diploma or equivalent

There are 322 occupations that typically require a high school diploma or the equivalent (such as a GED)—nearly twice as many occupations as at any other level of education. Table 2 shows occupations at the high school level that are projected to have the most openings annually, on average, from 2019 to 2029.

**Table 2. High school diploma or equivalent to enter:  
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2019–29**



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2019–29 annual average	Median annual wage, 2019	Typical work experience in a related occupation	Typical on-the- job training
Home health and personal care aides	568,800	\$25,280	None	Short-term
Customer service representatives	350,200	34,710	None	Short-term
Office clerks, general	317,500	34,040	None	Short-term
Stockers and order fillers	254,900	27,380	None	Short-term
Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive	195,200	37,690	None	Short-term
Childcare workers	160,200	24,230	None	Short-term
First-line supervisors of food preparation and serving workers	152,600	33,400	Less than 5 years	None
Security guards	142,700	29,680	None	Short-term
Maintenance and repair workers, general	139,400	39,080	None	Moderate-term
Receptionists and information clerks	139,200	30,050	None	Short-term

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

Projected openings in the occupations in table 2 account for about 37 percent of the total number of openings expected in occupations at this education level. With more than a half million openings expected each year, on average, over the decade, [home health and personal care aides](#) is projected to have the most openings of the

occupations in table 2. Many of the openings for these aides are expected to be from newly created jobs because this is also one of the fastest growing occupations.

Although none of the occupations in this table had wages higher than the median for all occupations, more than half of the occupations at this education level did. In addition to a high school diploma or equivalent, most of the occupations in table 2 also typically require on-the-job training for workers to gain competency in their tasks.

## **Associate's degree; postsecondary nondegree award; and some college, no degree**

Nearly 100 occupations typically require some education beyond a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. Most of these occupations typically require an associate's degree or a postsecondary nondegree award; six typically require some college but no degree. Table 3 shows the 10 occupations at these education levels that are projected to have the largest numbers of openings each year, on average, over the decade. (See table 3.)

**Table 3. Associate's degree; postsecondary nondegree award; and some college, no degree to enter: Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2019–29**



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2019–29 annual average	Median annual wage, 2019	Typical education needed for entry	Typical on-the-job training
Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers	209,200	\$45,260	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term
Nursing assistants	174,000	29,660	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	162,100	41,230	Some college, no degree	Moderate-term
Teaching assistants, except postsecondary	140,400	27,920	Some college, no degree	None
Medical assistants	92,800	34,800	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	70,600	26,090	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	61,700	42,090	Postsecondary nondegree award	Short-term
Licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses	58,400	47,480	Postsecondary nondegree award	None
Computer user support specialists	53,600	52,270	Some college, no degree	None
Preschool teachers, except special education	50,600	30,520	Associate's degree	None

Note: None of the occupations in the table typically require work experience in a related occupation for entry.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

The occupational openings shown in the table account for about 62 percent of all openings projected in occupations that typically require an associate's degree, postsecondary nondegree award, or some college but no degree. [Heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers](#) is projected to have the most openings of the occupations in table 3: about 209,200 each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029. The largest number of those openings is expected to be from the need to replace workers who leave the occupation permanently rather than from new jobs due to employment growth.

Half of the occupations in table 3 had wages that were higher than the median for all occupations. On-the-job training to attain competency is typically required in a few of the occupations in the table.

## Bachelor's degree

A bachelor's degree is typically required for entry in 169 occupations. Table 4 shows the occupations at this education level projected to have the most openings each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029.



**Table 4. Bachelor's degree to enter:**  
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2019–29



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2019–29 annual average	Median annual wage, 2019	Typical work experience in a related occupation
General and operations managers	204,400	\$100,780	5 years or more
Registered nurses	175,900	73,300	None
Software developers and software quality assurance analysts and testers	131,400	107,510	None
Project management specialists and business operations specialists, all other	128,000	73,570	None
Accountants and auditors	125,700	71,550	None
Elementary school teachers, except special education	103,200	59,670	None
Management analysts	87,100	85,260	Less than 5 years
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	84,200	63,790	None
Personal service managers, all other; entertainment and recreation managers, except gambling; and managers, all other	74,500	110,630	Less than 5 years
Secondary school teachers, except special and career/technical education	71,100	61,660	None

Note: None of the occupations in the table typically require on-the-job training for competency.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.


About 40 percent of all openings projected in the bachelor's-level group are in the occupations shown in table 4. [General and operations managers](#) is projected to have the most openings (204,400) annually, on average, of any occupation that typically requires a bachelor's degree for entry. This large occupation employs workers across many industries; specific entry requirements and prospects vary.

Each of the occupations in table 4 had wages that were higher than the median for all occupations. That's not surprising, given that nearly every occupation at this education level had higher-than-median wages. A few of the occupations in the table typically require work experience in a related occupation in addition to a bachelor's degree, but none typically requires on-the-job training for workers to attain competency.

## Master's, doctoral, and professional degrees

In 36 occupations, a master's degree is typically required for entry; 63 occupations typically require a doctoral or professional degree. Table 5 shows the 10 occupations at these education levels that are projected to have the most openings annually, on average, from 2019 to 2029.

**Table 5. Master's, doctoral, and professional degree to enter:  
Occupations projected to have the most openings each year, on average, 2019–29**



Occupation	Occupational openings, projected 2019–29 annual average	Median annual wage, 2019	Typical education needed for entry	Typical work experience in a related occupation	Typical on-the-job training
Lawyers	39,900	\$122,960	Doctoral or professional degree	None	None
Educational, guidance, and career counselors and advisors	33,100	57,040	Master's degree	None	None
Health specialties teachers, postsecondary	26,000	97,320	Doctoral or professional degree	Less than 5 years	None
Nurse practitioners	24,200	109,820	Master's degree	None	None
Education administrators, kindergarten through secondary	20,000	96,400	Master's degree	5 years or more	None
Healthcare social workers	19,600	56,750	Master's degree	None	Internship/ residency
Postsecondary teachers, all other	18,900	68,970	Doctoral or professional degree	None	None
Instructional coordinators	17,700	66,290	Master's degree	5 years or more	None
Physical therapists	15,200	89,440	Doctoral or professional degree	None	None
Speech-language pathologists	13,700	79,120	Master's degree	None	Internship/ residency

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

The occupational openings in table 5 account for about 46 percent of all openings projected in master's, doctoral, and professional degree-level occupations. With 39,900 openings each year, on average, from 2019 to 2029, [lawyers](#) is projected to have more openings than any other occupation at these levels of education. Most of those openings are expected to be from the need to replace workers who leave the occupation.

Wages for each of the occupations in table 5 were higher than the median for all occupations. In fact, of the 99 occupations at these education levels, only [rehabilitation counselors](#) (\$35,950)—not shown in the table—had a wage below the median. High wages are more common in occupations that typically require many years of school and experience or training, as the ones in table 5 do, than in occupations that have few requirements.

## For more information

Learn more about the occupations in this article and hundreds of others in the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) (OOH). The OOH has lots of detail, including what workers do and their pay, job outlook, and typical education requirements.

The BLS Employment Projections program has additional information on [education and training](#), as well as [occupational openings](#). For example, [Table 5.4](#) shows the typical entry-level education and training assignments for all occupations, according to BLS, and [Table 5.3](#) shows workers' educational attainment within occupations based on data from the [American Community Survey](#).

*Elka Torpey is an economist in the Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections, BLS. She can be reached at [torpey.elka@bls.gov](mailto:torpey.elka@bls.gov).*

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